

May 28, 2010

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján voted to pass the America COMPETES Act, which will improve American competitiveness, encourage economic development and help train a new generation of researchers and scientists. The legislation originated in the House Committee on Science and Technology where Rep. Luján included language to enhance cooperative agreements between Department of Energy (DOE) national laboratories and small businesses along with language to support minority students who pursue Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. The America COMPETES Reauthorization Act will update and improve similar legislation that was passed in 2007. The bill passed the House by a vote of 262 to 150. It will now be considered by the Senate.

“The America COMPETES Act will drive innovation, support small businesses, increase American competitiveness, and create jobs,” said Rep. Luján. “During these difficult economic times, it’s more important than ever to make sure the United States remains competitive. The America COMPETES Act sets us on a path to be more globally competitive in technology, research and development while encouraging job growth at home.”

During the Committee process, Rep. Luján included a critical amendment that will make funds available to pay for the federal portion of Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs) at DOE national laboratories. CRADAs are a mechanism by which a basic science technology that has been developed at a national laboratory can be matured for the marketplace in cooperation with a small business. However, every year in DOE laboratories across the country, many potential cooperative work agreements go unrealized because a small business can’t afford to pay for the federal portion of the work along with its own portion of the work. Rep. Luján’s amendment will enhance the cooperative agreements between DOE national labs and small businesses and in doing so will help spur innovation, support small businesses, and create jobs.

“It’s important to encourage cooperative agreements between small businesses and our

national laboratories. Our national laboratories are developing new technology that could change the way we generate energy, keep our airports safer, and make our hospitals healthier, and this legislation will make sure this technology gets into a competitive marketplace to encourage economic development and create jobs here in America.”

Rep. Luján worked with Committee Chairman Bart Gordon to include support for Hispanic-Serving Institutions' programs as well as language to establish into law the Tribal Colleges and Universities Program at the National Science Foundation. This program awards grants to tribal colleges and universities to improve the quality of undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, and to increase the retention and graduation rates of Native American students pursuing degrees in STEM fields.

“The COMPETES Act makes key investments in science education, ensuring that our students are prepared for the jobs of the future. For too long there has been a divide that has kept minority students out of these fields. We must close this divide and make sure that this generation of students has the opportunity to be the next generation of scientists, researchers and inventors.”

Rep. Luján also included language in the bill that will double funding for technology transfer programs at the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) – a DOE agency that brings together a diverse community of energy researchers from the nation’s national laboratories, universities, investor and commercial communities to develop cutting-edge technologies to help solve our energy problems. This amendment empowers businesses to grow the technology developed in our national laboratories and universities for commercial application.

Over 140 organizations have endorsed the legislation including: the Association of American Universities, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the Biotechnology Industry Organization, the Business Roundtable, the Council on Competitiveness, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Venture Capital Association, TechAmerica, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.